

STATEMENT



FROM REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES B. RANGEL
Ranking Democrat, Committee on Ways and Means

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REP. RANGEL CALLS FOR BIPARTISAN APPROACH TO FAST TRACK/TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY AT SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING

Thank you Chairman Baucus and my dear friend Senator Grassley. I am pleased to be here with my brother and Ranking Member on the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, Congressman Levin. When you talked about what is the good news, you are the good news as Chairman. This is not because you are a Democrat or because my friend Mr. Grassley is a Republican. But because of the tone you set that when you're dealing by foreign policy and trade policy.

I think we all enjoy a sense of pride in that policy being bipartisan. And I think by having the Senate in Democratic control that some of us feel that, even if you're losing on these issues, that we have a chance to have it debated. And that's what this Congress should be all about. Not just winning but being able to go back home and talk to your constituents and say through you their concerns have been heard. And certainly you two have demonstrated – most recently on the tax bill – a bipartisanship that may be a little too much for me to consume. Nevertheless I am confident whether we're talking about "Trade Promotion Authority" or "Fast Track" that everyone will have an opportunity to try to develop a bipartisanship approach to very important subject matter.

Because, as you said Mr. Chairman, there is no one that is more concerned about maintaining our competitive edge, expanding economic growth, and that realizing that in order to do this we have to find new markets, we have to break down the barriers to trade. And some of us believe that we can do these things and protect certain values that are not just American values which we're so proud of, but international humane values. And if we can do this, as we protect investors and intellectual property rights as we should, then we should also have on our agenda to make certain that our trading partners maintain core standards in protecting labor and protecting the environment which we inherited and which we would like to leave in better shape than we've had.

So it's not that we would want to dictate and to superimpose our standard on other countries. As a matter of fact, the government of Jordan was the one that was setting the standards and we were agreeing with them. Countries have the same sense about their people as we do about ours. The same goes for the environment. They now find, instead of the House responding to an agreement that passed last year and was negotiated last year, that we're asking them to disable their agreement, in order to reach our lack of standards.

We are here to say, “help us to try to create the atmosphere for us to get together to see what we can do.” And don’t put up barriers between us based on party labels.

Yesterday, in the *Congress Daily AM* the leading story was “GOP House Leaders Seek Trade Vote Before August Recess”: “The House Republican Leadership has decided to try to put presidential trade negotiating authority to a vote during July, bringing the simmering war over the measure to sizzle far sooner than many had expected. According to congressional and K street sources, last week’s introduction of a measure by Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee Chairman Phillip Crane, R-Ill., was part of an effort to jump-start consideration of the bill and secure a vote before the August recess.” The hurtful thing about this is not that Chairman Phil Crane is not my friend – he is – but that he has never discussed this subject matter with me since we’ve been in the Congress. This is the same Subcommittee Chairman and the same committee that effectively negotiated the African Growth and Opportunity Act, that worked on the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and that we worked with to normalize trade with China. And yet this subject matter has not been discussed with any Democrats: not the Ranking Member of the Trade Subcommittee, not the Chairman of Finance, not with anyone. And unilaterally we find out about this in *Congress Daily*. What a way to start on bipartisanship?

And the President said Monday in a speech that he gave: “And I mean a trade promotion authority bill, too, that’s not laden down with all kinds of excuses not to trade.” Did we act like we were looking for excuses not to trade when we worked with Republicans in the House and the Senate in order to get these trade agreements through last year? “I want a bill that doesn’t have these codicils on it, that frighten people from trading with us.” What have we said as Democrats or Members of the Congress that would frighten our trading partners? “I like to remind people that if you’re a poor nation, it’s going to be hard to treat your people well, and if you’re a poor nation, it’s going to be hard to have good environmental policy, and trade is the best way to eliminate poverty, therefore, our trade agreements ought to be free from codicils which prevent us from freely trading.” That’s the President. So you see what we’re up against on the House side.

We want to join with you in saying that we don’t believe that there are any obstacles that by sitting down together that we can’t overcome because we have a same common goal. And that is to continue to improve the quality of life of United States citizens, to encourage and support economic growth, and to have a free trade policy that protects us here and at the same time allows us the benefits of trade. So we welcome the atmosphere that you’ve set Mr. Chairman and I have the deepest respect for Mr. Grassley because he has already indicated his willingness to work with us on this subject. Whatever influence you have on the House, suggest to them that we and others who happen to not be Republicans are anxious to sit down and to work with them.

Thank you so much.

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